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MACLAY RIVER.—Elerts, This day, 9 a.m.
 From MacKay Wharf, Fort MacKay—
MANNING RIVER.—Cunski, This day, upon.
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E F T S & C O

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FEDERAL CONVENTION.

PROGRESS OF COMMITTEE WORK.

DOUBTS AND FEARS OF DELEGATES.

A SHARP STRUGGLE IN THE CONVENTION ANTICIPATED.

WILL THERE BE TIME TO FINISH

(FROM OUR SPECIAL REPORTERS)

—

ADELAIDE, Sunday.

A somewhat despondent feeling has seized upon members of the Convention during the past few days. They say it will be very tough for the Convention to frame a Constitution Bill before the present meeting closes; but they recognise that this is only the first of the obstacles to be surmounted before the colonies are united in one federal bond. Several of the New South Wales delegates declare that there is no chance of the constitution being completed before the meeting closes, in which case it is almost certain to emerge from the present Con-

vetation. Their argument is that the Senate, or the States Assembly as the Constitutional Committee proposes it shall be called, will be far too powerful and conservative, and that the smaller States will have an altogether dominating share of influence in it. The Victorians also, it is said, will have equally strong objections to a constitution with a powerful and intractable Senate, the experience of Victoria is that respect having been unfortunate.

various points in dispute during the general debate was unmistakable, and the Constitution Committee is modifying the bill of 1891 almost entirely in line with the main features of the proposals published in the *Monday's Herald*, which was based on the general debate. As mentioned in the previous issue, the main outlines of the Constitutional Bill as it will in all probability emerge from the present sitting of the Convention are a federal government with two Houses, both elected direct by the people, the House of Representatives to be elected by South Australia one adult one vote. The House of Representatives will be elected on the basis of one representative to about 50,000 of the population, and the Senate will be elected by each State voting at one electorate, as at the recent Convention elections.

Each State will have equal representation in the Senate, and the Senate will be clothed with powers as nearly co-ordinate with the House of Representatives as is consistent with the preservation of the principle of responsible government. It will have power to reject all bills, and to amend probably all but taxation, loan, and appropriation bills, though it is possible that the delegates from the smaller States will claim and obtain for the Senate power to amend appropriation bills.

disapproval of the House of Representatives. It is unacceptable to the people of the more populous States such as New South Wales and Victoria. Several of the delegates from these two colonies are not backward in expressing their view that Tasmania is rather a hindrance in the way than a help towards equitable federal union. Tasmania, they say, enables South Australia and Western Australia to demand a representation in the Senate disproportionate to the smaller States, and they contend results would be more satisfactory if Queensland was in the Convention and Tasmania out of it. Tasmania, they point out, is and must always be very small. It has comparatively little in common

with the continent, and should, like New Zealand, remain outside the federation. The latter is prepared to accept the position of subordinate to the kind of appendage to Victoria. All the other colonies, these delegates point out, are in reality large States, and the objection to their having great representation in the Senate would not be so great. It is only a question of time, they say, before Queensland and Western Australia will rival New South Wales and Victoria in wealth and population, and South Australia though lagging behind in the race for a number of years, will eventually, when the trans-continental railway is finished, rank as a peer with the other colonies.

on the mainland. It may be remembered here that Western Australians draw a convenient distinction by describing the future railway from Adelaide to Perth as the "trans-Australian line" and the railway from the eastern States to Perth in the west as the trans-Australian line.

Mr. Lyons is one of those who hold that Tasmania is an awkward morsel so far as federation is concerned, and he and several of his friends declare that the proper course is for the three great colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland to federate on equitable terms and to insist that the colonies would be bound to come in. This, however, is not the general sentiment, as the desire for im-

mediate union of the whole continent into one commonwealth is deeply rooted in the minds of most of the delegates. Speaking of the chance of the adoption of the proposed plan, Mr. Lynde says that unless it is altered shortly, the Parliaments of the various colonies will have "got Buckley's show" of winning the approval of the people. The arrangement of each colony as one electorate for the Senate will, he thinks, be the best for the whole. He is, however, not at all well-convicted that there would be any chance of election to it except as the result of a sharp fight on a party ticket. There will be a big fight, he says, in the first Federal Parliament between freetraders and

and protectionists, and the Senators from each State will be solid in their opposition to the tariff. The field is divided. The minority in each colony will be represented. The majority, he holds, will almost certainly be protectionist, but he thinks it would not be fair to deny the minority their share of representation. He points out that at the recent Convention election in New South Wales political issues were sunk, and the election was recognized as a vote for the tariff from all quarters; but when it comes to a tariff fight in the Federal Parliament it will be different altogether. The first election, he says, will be on that issue only, and there will be strict party tickets for both Houses; and as senators will be

lected from each colony as one electorate, each colony will be represented in the Senate by one official member, and the three official members of each labour party would have its share of representation in the Senate to be truly representative of each State, but under the one electorate system the labour party, being in the minority in all the colonies would have no representation at all, as the present idea is to have six senators for each colony. This, he says, would give the minority some chance of representation, and would be a more direct representation of the country districts. Dividing New South Wales into six electorates would mean 21 of the present Legislative Assembly electorates in each

of the senatorial electorate, and that would be sufficiently large to ensure difference between the representation in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Mr. Haynes and Gormir, M.L.A.s, who are at present in Adelaide with the object of inspecting the South Australian wheat country up to Port Augusta and Herzog Springs, 450 miles north of Adelaide, have been watching the Convention proceedings here during the past few days, and express surprise at the large majority in favour of the equal representation of the States in the Senate. They agree that the States are not satisfied with the present arrangement, but they are not so sure that the States are talking about making the position of the Senator the

"blue riband" of Australian political life will only set the minds of the people against the constitution framed by the present Convention. An argument which has been used lately by one of two delegates is that it will do no harm for some of the delegates to reject the proposed Bill of Rights, which is being framed by the present Convention, because if the people have learned so much about federation since 1891 they will learn a great deal more by the time another and final Convention assembles, six or seven years hence. This argument, however, is only the outcome of the despondent mood into which some of the delegates have lately fallen.

Despite Mr. McMillan's sanguine forecast several prominent delegates persist in declaring it to be impossible to fix up a satisfactory scheme of federal finance before the Convention must adjourn. The Convention cannot at later than the 24th April. The New South Wales Parliament meets on the 27th April and the delegates are leaving for their own land by that date. They are, however, expected to finish before Good Friday, as only 10 working days remain till then. The estimate made by Mr. Reid and others that the constitutional committee would finish by to-morrow has proved too sanguine. At the present

There are perhaps more than thirty delegates from the various States and Territories, and the Convention will have done very well. Some say it will not be completed till Monday, the 12th instant, or two days before the Western Australian delegates leave. When the bill comes before the Convention, unless there are evening sittings extending up to a late hour, it is difficult to see how the Convention can possibly finish its labours in the eight working days of the Convention. It is, however, to be remembered that the Convention is not yet formally admitted on all sides that there will be some very sharp fights in the Convention. The experience of the finance committee shows that the fiscal issue will probably lead to a good deal of debate when

the financial clauses come under review. It will be the case, says if no one else brings the matter up, that the bill will be amended so that the sale of the capital is discussed. The bill is not intended to solve all the other problems which they regard as of equal importance, and though such amendments will be made, they will be quickly disposed of by the committee and will not collectively consume many precious hours. Then there are the questions of the size of the company, the bigger issues requiring attention, such as the powers of the board of directors, the financial arrangements, the constitution of the company, the management, the franchise, and the like, which will need to be discussed in detail, and will consequently lead to much discussion. There are also about 100 machinery clauses in the bill which will take up some time, even if the convention gallops through. Then the fear of the condemnation of the

Mr. Reid, who has hitherto been most regular in his attendance on the constitutional committee, stands on Monday to join in the labors of the finance committee. He is said to be well and fully acquainted with their work. It is gathered that the statements about the fiscal issue having been raised in the finance committee make him wish to be fully seized of the arguments leading up to the

recommendaions of the committee, in order that he may be fully prepared to deal with the financial scheme when it comes before the Convention.

Though the referendum will almost certainly be brought before the Convention, it is now believed that it will not be utilized except in such vital matters as amendments of the constitution. The same

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THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, MONDAY, APRIL 5, 1897.

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